



**CONSUMER HEALTH LIBRARY PANEL (CHLP)**

**INFORMATION THERAPY**

**AUGUST 2012**

Information therapy is described as the “prescription of specific evidence-based medical information to specific patients at just the right time to help them make specific health decisions or behavior changes.” (Kemper DW, et al. Information therapy: a Tale. Health Forum Journal 2002, Jan-Feb; 45(1): 16-20). Studies have demonstrated that the provision of consumer health information at the point of medical care can increase compliance with treatment regimens, satisfaction with the health care provider and medical facility, and improve the ultimate health outcome for the individual. Health care costs are also a factor; patients who do not understand their treatment instructions, disease management, or prescription requirements are more likely to mishandle their health, be hospitalized more frequently, and have much higher medical costs than their more involved counterparts.

In this new era of patient-center care and VHA’s emphasis on shared decision making, health care providers should understand the importance of consumer health information and education to their patients, and be able to find and/or refer their patients to current, reader-appropriate, and evidence-based information.

Professional VA librarians aid clinicians by facilitating the dissemination of appropriate resources to patients. They are engaged in consumer health information services and are well-versed in providing evidence-based, reading-appropriate materials to patients and their families. Some librarians have more formal programs with actual “information prescription” pads and the ability to document encounters in the electronic medical record, while others are more informal with word-of-mouth referrals and drop-in visits.

This bibliography provides resources to clinicians, patient educators, and librarians on Information Therapy. While most VA libraries provide consumer health information to Veterans and their families, those VA libraries that have been identified as providing more formal Information Therapy services are also listed.

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## Journal Articles

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## Internet Resources

The Center for Information Therapy

<https://www.urac.org/sponsors/allianceCIT.aspx>

“The Center for Information Therapy (IxCenter) is an independent, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization that aims to advance the practice and science of information therapy (Ix) to improve health, consumer decision making and healthy behaviors. The IxCenter acts as a catalyst for health care delivery innovation by diffusing Ix (?) strategies through research, education and collaboration.”

*Information Ix toolkit.* (2009, Aug 4). Retrieved 3/19/2010 from

<http://nnlm.gov/hip/infoRx/>

VA Library network (VALNET): *Consumer Health.* Retrieved 3/18/2010, from

[http://www1.va.gov/VALNET/Consumer\\_Health.asp](http://www1.va.gov/VALNET/Consumer_Health.asp)

The Information Rx Store (National Library of Medicine). <http://www.informationrx.org>

The Information Rx Program from The National Library of Medicine “provides physicians an easy way to refer their patients to an authoritative, user-friendly and commercial-free internet site for health information” Ordering information for free prescriptions pads and other materials, promotional suggestions for clinicians and librarians, and more is available.

## Book(s)

Kemper, D. W. & Mettler, M. (2002). *Information therapy: prescribed information as a reimbursable medical service.* Boise, ID: Healthwise, Incorporated.

## VA Libraries with Information Therapy Programs

**San Francisco, CA:** Clinicians in the main hospital and CBOCs can request consultation for information from the Health Education Library for Patients in CPRS. This is a popular feature with the CBOCs. If a clinician requests Diabetes information, for example, a packet of information prepared by our Diabetes Nurse Educator (either Type 1 or Type 2) is sent. If there is a request for carbohydrate counting in diabetes, the request is usually forwarded to one of the dieticians to arrange a consultation either by phone or in person with the patient. Requests and materials sent are reviewed by a nurse and cleared from CPRS. For routine requests, we send information from Krames and other sources and reviewed by the Librarian.

**Bay Pines, FL:** Librarians and clinicians use a combination of “prescription” pad and verbal referrals. There are occasional formal electronic consults plus many patients and family members “self-refer”. Information supplied or viewed plus any patient concerns are documented in the Patient Education Note in CPRS by the appropriate library staff. Information packets are prepared and are given directly to the patient or mailed to their home address depending on circumstances.

**Tampa, FL:** Clinicians and Librarians collaborate in both formal and informal processes. “Prescription” pads are available to clinicians, and highlighted in new employee orientations. Electronic alerts are used via CPRS; emails and telephone calls are also frequent methods of requesting information. When the clinician provides the patient’s name and last four of the Social Security number, the Librarian documents materials given and any comments/questions voiced by the patient or family in the medical record. Clinicians also refer patients less formally; patients also self-refer. Materials may be picked up in the library, mailed to clinicians or patients, or delivered electronically.

**Topeka, KS:** The Librarian and the Veterans Health Education Coordinator work together closely. The VHE Coordinator has made up packets of pamphlets for the most frequent diagnoses (approximately one dozen) such as diabetes, hypertension, etc. Physicians have been given a type of prescription pad with the names of the packets, so they can just checkmark the packet or packets they want the patient to pick up. Patients also self refer for information, or are sent without a prescription.

**Lexington, KY:** A Patient Education Resource Center is contained within the Medical



Library. Clinicians refer patients daily. The Library Technician keeps a log book that lists the questions asked, status of person (patient, family member, or volunteer), date, and what source met the need (i.e. Micromedex, Krames-on-Demand, MD Consult, medical reference section, video, etc.). The log is also divided into sections of medical vs. non-medical type questions (medical reference or general reference). The log has helped tremendously when Librarians revisit types of materials for which patients ask.

**Battle Creek, MI:** Patient Consults are sent electronically to the library. After a Veteran has had an appointment with their doctor, or when a Veteran is first admitted as an inpatient, the clinician sends a Patient Health Information Request in Vista requesting information for the Veteran on his/her diagnosis. Using library reference books, pamphlets or articles from website databases, information (at a level best understood by the Veteran) is printed, then delivered to the Veteran on the ward, mailed to the home, or picked up by the Veteran (or spouse) at the library, whichever is appropriate. After this is done, the library staff that provided the information uses a template in CPRS to update the patient's record.

**Detroit, MI:** Librarians work closely with the PERC, which is staffed by an education person. Patients are sent to the learning center by clinicians with verbal or written orders, 3x5 cards, or formal consults generated in CPRS. The cards are multicolored and kept in each exam room. On one side it gives directions to the PERC with basic information (hours, location, phone, names) and on the other side there are check-off boxes and a space for the provider to write a brief note. Patients also self-refer.

**Northport, NY:** Librarian attends New Employee Orientation and explains Library Services for employees, Veterans, and family members. There is also an outreach service whereby recreational reading materials are delivered to inpatients and nursing home residents; at the same time, the patients are asked if they have any questions regarding their health, medications, etc.

**Salisbury, NC:** Some clinicians refer patients/family to the Patients' Library for information about their disease/treatment in an informal process.

**Tennessee Valley Healthcare System (TVHS), Nashville and Murfreesboro, TN:** TVHS has two large locations with a Patient and Family Library in Nashville and a full-service Medical, Staff, and Patient and Family Library in Murfreesboro. Both sites have a PERC and offer information therapy through self-referrals and consults. A consult system is set up through CPRS allowing providers to refer patients for information therapy. Our Library Technician researches material and the Veterans Health Education Coordinator reviews for appropriateness before the information is mailed. Library staff and Veterans Health Education Coordinators work closely together to insure health information is timely and appropriate for the Veteran. We have a video

library of health CD's that we can show to patients. To support the video library, we have six individual carrels with DVD players and screens to accommodate viewing.